The Research Skills of Graduate Students in the Master Degree of Education at Kuwait University

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The aim of this study was to identify theresearch skills of graduate studentsin the College of Education at Kuwait University.The study sample comprised of 68 graduate students. For the purpose of the study, the researcher developed a questionnaire that consisted of 48 items covering two domains: required research skills, and research difficulties. The validity of the questionnaire was checked by agroup of professors in the College of Education. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficientwas found to be adequate. Results revealed that MA students have certain needs which should be fulfilled to be able to conduct research properly. In addition, they encounter certain difficulties which hinder the research process and inhibit achieving the purpose of research which is graduating competent researchers as well as knowledgeable teachers. The study concludes with some recommendations based on the findings such as: Providing MA students with a solid background on research methodology and familiarizing MA students with the importance of research in the educational process.

Keywords: research skills, graduate students, master in education, the State of Kuwait.

المهارات البحثية لطلبة الدراسات العليا في درجة الماجستير التربوي في جامعة الكويت

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هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على المهارات البحثية لدى طلبة الدراسات العليا في كلية التربية بجامعة الكويت. تكونت عينة الدراسة من 68 من طلبة الدراسات العليا. ولغرض الدراسة قام الباحث ببناء استبانة تكونت من ٤٨ بندا وزعوا على مجالين: المهارات البحثية المطلوبة، والصعوبات البحثية. ولقد تم التأكد من صدق الأداة بعرضها على مجموعة من الأساتذة في كلية التربية. أما ثبات الأداة فقد تم استخدام معامل ألفا كرونباخ حيث كان معامل الثبات الكلي للأداة يساوي ٠.٨٥٠. وكشفت النتائج أن الطلاب لديهم احتياجات لبعض المهارات البحثية حتى يتمكنوا من إجراء البحوث بشكل صحيح. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك فإن طلبة الدراسات العليا يواجهون بعض الصعوبات التي تعيق عملية البحث وتمنع تحقق الغرض منه وهو إعداد باحثين تربويين متخصصين وكذلك معلمين متمكنين علميا. و بناءً على نتائج الدراسة تم تقديم بعض التوصيات من مثل: تزويد طلبة الدراسات العليا بأساسيات البحث العلمي ومنهجيته، و توعية طلبة الدراسات العليا بأهمية البحث في العملية التعليمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية : مهارات بحثية ، طلبة الدراسات العليا ، ماجستير تربوي، دولة الكويت.

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Pursuing an MA degree in teacher education programs means that teachers will have an in-depth opportunity to develop their professional pedagogical skills and professional knowledge. In addition, research skills will be under great focus as a completion of a thesis "necessitates that graduate students have an understanding of educational research" (Moulding and Hadley, 2010, p. 43). This means that teachers as MA graduates are expected to learn a body of knowledge about meaningful inquiry and develop an understanding of the criteria for quality research to be better consumers, as this will develop them as reflective practitioners whom will be more compatible with the goals of educational research (Wilson, 1995; Wong, 1995; Reis-Jorge, 2005). Wilson (2006, p. 316) affirmed that a "well-educated professional is someone who appreciates, understands, consumes, and uses research that comes out of many disciplinary and interdisciplinary traditions".

No doubt being both a competent teacher and a researcher is crucial in any educational context where teachers will experience in their classrooms some problems which deserve investigation to reach an educated understanding and explanation of them. As Simmons et al. (1999, p. 931) stated " In an enterprise such as education … research is the best hope we have of distinguishing between fads and facts, prejudices and informed judgment, habits and insights… Without good research, we will continue on an endless cycle of mistakes, and, in the end, the same faltering school system".

Reis-Jorge (2007) explained that the development of an understanding of research is achieved through three methods: reading, formal tuition, and immersion. This shows that teachers are required to go through a learning process as they become first, critical consumers of research and then, creative producers of research. Price (2001) provided that a well-designed research course will have an important influence on teaching practice.

Some research studies have explored the impact of graduate students' research experience of their performance as teachers and future researchers. Dorfman & Liscomb (2005) conducted a study on a group of graduate music students studying a course in research methods to ascertain the impact of that course on changing their attitudes towards research. They reached that prior to the course; students could not foresee that research is a permanent activity of their professional career. However, Dorfman & Liscomb concluded that post course results revealed students appreciation and understanding of the importance of research to their teaching profession.

After studying the graduate students' application of research skills including research design, administration, questionnaire analysis, Reis-Jorge (2007) confirmed that graduate students have to learn how to conduct research as that will enable them to know how to move from being critical consumers of research to creative producers of it. Taylor (2007) divided graduate students into three groups in the process of research learning. The novice group was those students who viewed themselves as receivers of information about research waiting to be taught by the expert teacher educators. The second group was the collectors of information and experiences about their own teaching practices. The third group, Taylor (2007, p.10) called it the "critical engagers" who construct their knowledge based on "modification and change through purposeful practitioner inquiry, in order to raise questions, examine assumptions and suggest alternatives". Furthermore, Warren, Door & Green (2008) investigated the role of a graduate research course on introducing teachers to the importance of research to their teaching profession. Results showed that graduate students started to consider research as an active process in their teaching profession.

An overarching problem is convincing students that they are capable of conducting research. Many graduate students hold incorrect image that they cannot function as researchers since research is done only by professionals (Dorfman & Lipscomb, 2005; Topping & Hoffman, 2002). Once the teachers complete their graduate studies and become involved in the daily challenges of their profession, there is often a little time or energy remaining to conduct research (Ravid & Leon, 1995). According to Bailie (2009, p. 768) "Too often, students view research as just another "requirement" to complete their degrees without the realization that continued involvement with the research community, as a consumer or a participant, should play a central role in their professional lives". Bailie (2004) studied graduate students' reflection on research and how they view themselves as researcher based

on how they interpret the connection between research and teaching. The study showed that MA students were afraid and hesitant to conduct research, and their narrow concept of research was connected with a course completion merely. Yates (2004) confirmed that the value of a thesis could be obscured by the process.

Graduate students often experience problems which delay their studies or prevent them from finishing them. According to Helm (1989) these problems are threefold, namely problems in the research design, the collecting and processing of data, and the authorship of the report. Among the obstacles which graduate students face is a general lack of knowledge about research skills and accessing online resources (Winicki, 2006). Moreover, the majority of graduate students is not in the habit of reading professional journals and is reluctant to evaluate research studies (Duze, 2010; Winicki, 2006, Topping & Hoffman, 2002, Yassen, 2009; Huseen, 2009; Shagoor, 2009; & Al-Nadi, 2009). Out of the 15 research skills which Ravid (1997) examined, he found that among the lowest rated skills were knowing how to compare and interpret statistics, carrying out a formal thesis study, and the ability to publish research findings.

Bailie (2009) studied what research methods should be applied to increase graduate students understanding and appreciation of the role which research plays to improve their teaching and future research inquiry. He discovered that this could be accomplished by encouraging students to attend conferences and increasing their awareness of the positive connections between research, teaching, and students' maturation in the understanding of the importance of research.

Vehvilanen (2009) investigated the difficulties faced by students in their choice of the research problem and the role of the academic supervisor in the implementation process. The results showed that most of the students suffered from a difficulty in finding a problem to bead dressed as an MA thesis. The students believed that their supervisors did not provide the necessary critical feed back in order to assist them in the writing process of the thesis.

Moulding and Hadley (2010) found out that postgraduate participants recognized the importance of educational research and the growing need for research results to be used for policy decisions. Nevertheless, they retained misconceptions about how educational research could be applied to their classroom practices.

Al-Ajez (2000) investigated the points of view of MA students in the Colleges of Education in Palestinian Universities about the problems they faced during their studies. Students revealed that they encountered different types of problems. The first problem was related to the registration process of their research topic. As for MA students from the College of Education at the Islamic University, the encountered problems were related to the unavailability of a list of problems afflicting the education system at all levels. As for MA students in Government Universities, they complained of the lack of staff support in preparing research proposals and plans. However, MA students at the University of Azhar, faced a difficulty in obtaining documents related to their research topics. The second problem was related to conducting research, students at both Government Universities and University of Azhar complained of the lack of recent references and periodicals in their colleges' libraries, while students at the Islamic University complained about the limited time to read relevant literature. The third problem was related to supervisors' interaction with the MA students during the writing period of their research. They stated that their supervisors imposed on certain research topics.

Taraf (2003) explored the problems of graduate students in four universities in Syria. He reached that the most encountered problems were: students' lack of financial support, the lengthy period in selecting the research topic, the lengthy period in completing the research proposal before registering as MA candidates, the slow administrative procedures in relation to the registration of the research topic, the long period of the writing up process of the thesis, the insufficient time available for supervisors to provide quality supervision, and the shortage in research facilities.

Al-Kutheri (2005) investigated the problems of thesis writing which graduate students at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction in the College of Education at King Saud University encountered. The study confirmed problems related to research plan, the unavailability of relevant references and studies, the Lack of knowledge of the different methods of con-

ducting research, the ignorance of selecting appropriate statistical processing programs, and problems in the writing up of research.

Shatnawi (2006) explored the administrative problems faced by male and female graduate students in the supervision process of their thesis at the University of Yarmouk. The study pointed out that the problems were in the procedures for choosing the supervisors, and selecting the research topic and its title. In addition, students suffered from the way their supervisors treated them during the process of supervision.

Kabeesh (2007) looked at some of the problems faced by graduate students at Al-Fateh University. The study revealed that the ambition of 79.2% of the students was only to get a higher degree in education. A total of 99.1% of the students complained about the lack of relevant books, references, and recent scientific journals, in addition to their need to be connected globally with the information network. Furthermore, 95.3% of the students pointed out the lack of proper scientific instruments and specialized workshops related to curriculum and courses. A total of 88.7% of the students stated that they were unaware of the application of statistical programs and they relied on traditional methods.

Al- Shamari (2008) studied developing research skills among undergraduate students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the light of the experiences of some international universities. The study aimed at developing students' scientific research skills through targeting a number of accomplishments, including: skills of accessing information, skills of conducting research, and skills of the writing up of research. Al-Shamari proposed induction of research courses to guide students on how to conduct and write research. Al-Shamari also recommended that faculty staff should follow up students to stand on their strengths and weaknesses in research writing.

Al-Aqeel (2008) investigated the problems of graduate students at government universities in Saudi Arabia and their relationship with academic achievement. The study reached the following results: absence of a suggested research plan which highlights the most important topics to be searched by master and doctoral degree students. The unavailability of up-to-date journals which help students to be familiar with the most addressed research top-

ics internationally. The inaccessibility of most-up-to-date references and books in the university library. Finally, the need for international scientific trips for students to keep connected with recent development in the field of research.

Barakat and Huseen (2009) studied the future developmental needs of graduate students in education in some Palestinian Universities from the point of views of the students themselves. The study questionnaire investigated 6 domains as follows: the professional domain, the academic domain, the scientific research domain, the administrative domain, the social domain and the technology domain. As for the current study, the results of both the academic and the scientific research domains are of significance to highlight. The results of the academic requirements and needs as suggested by the students were: to know the importance and goals of higher education, to use modern technologies such as e-learning and computer to access information related to research and course requirements, to practice the skill of research presentation as well as to participate in scientific debates, seminars and workshops, and to attend scientific meetings and conferences. The results of the requirements and needs of the scientific research domain as suggested by the students were to be trained on the organization of research, to know how to prepare it for discussion or publication, to know the ethics of scientific research, to know how to evaluate relevant research and select suitable references, to participate in debates and seminars, to be trained on how to construct suitable data collection tools, to know how to document references and citations, and to be trained on the use of computer-based data processing programs.

Al-Sharman (2010) studied the perceptions of graduate students in the College of Education at both Mutah and Yarmouk Universities regarding prospective problems which they may face in relation to students, faculty staff and the university administration. The study revealed that the main problems which graduate students may face were study expenses, and the poor command of English.

Al-Maghrabi (2012) researched the problems faced by graduate students when performing field research in the Islamic Education Department compared with the College of Education at Um Al-Qura University. The study

recommended the following: developing students' research skills including the preparation of research instruments such as questionnaires, interviews, etc. Introducing postgraduate students to the importance of research in the process of education. Encouraging the teaching staff to guide graduate students on how to conduct field research by providing intensive relevant courses.

According to Ismail (2009, p. 235) "There is no doubt that ineffectiveness of information and services provided by college, faculty or university at large contribute to low quality of student's research skills. Graduate students through their process of study and research learning grow from scholarship students to become responsible scholars as they grow independent, critical thinkers and creative (Lin and Cranton, 2005). Nevertheless, such a transition is very critical in their field of study, which is not always described as a fluent and an untroubled transition because in many cases graduate students are often ill-prepared to deal with the challenges which graduate studies pose on them (Lovitts, 2005; Malfroy, 2005).

In summary, the literature shows that graduate students in many countries encounter various types of difficulties related to administrative, professional, academic, technological, financial, and supervisory aspects of their studies. Such difficulties hinder them from completing their studies trouble free which affects the process of research. Research skills are an important issue to investigate in order to stand on the difficulties which graduate students face as that is essential to overcome since the primary goal is to obtain qualified researchers in the field of education. In the State of Kuwait, students register in the MA program in the College of Education at Kuwait University under the "Unified Degree" which aims " to develop the students' abilities of research, knowledge and skill. The program also promotes integration between the knowledge branches: the theoretical and practical", which should be in harmony with the practical nature of the program" (Graduate Catalog, 2010, p. 189). However, to fulfill such an objective, MA students' understanding of research conduction and writing must be investigated to know their readiness to do so.

Rationale and statement of problem

Holding an MA degree in Education is the goal of a great number of in-service teachers. Yet, the objective behind achieving that goal varies among them. Moulding & Hadley (2010, p. 44) explain " … some students seek understanding of research methods, while others focus more on advanced pedagogical knowledge". In that light, Johnes (2006, p. 28) argues "understanding the links between research and teaching in higher education is more than simply a matter of pedagogical interest. It is integral to the whole philosophy of Higher Education". In the College of Higher Studies at Kuwait University, MA students who apply for an MA degree are in-service teachers as it is a requirement to have a minimum of three years of teaching experience. However, when they join the College of Education, they struggle on the research part. Many of them view research as merely a step to the completion of their degree which leads many of them to think of the non-thesis option as a rescue, therefore; they prefer to choose research project option over thesis option. Ignorantly, they disregard that the research design of both these options is the same. The only difference between the two options is the internal and external review process which a thesis has to receive over the research project which will be solely evaluated by a mini committee of two faculty members and the project supervisor. From that confusing point of what research looks like, many MA students lack an understanding of doing educational research because of their lack of research skills, although a main objective of the College of Higher Studies and the College of Education Higher Studies Program is to encourage future research. Therefore, the study attempts to investigate the research skills of MA graduate students at the College of Education in Kuwait University to identify the difficulties they encounter. The study tends to answer the following questions:

1) What are the required research skills as perceived by MA students at the College of Education?

2) What are the encountered research difficulties as perceived by MA students at the College of Education?

3) Are there significant differences among the MA students in relation to the fol-

lowing variables (gender, year of study, degree, and specialization)?

Significance of the study

There are limited recent studies dedicated to the difficulties face graduate students in the process of research doing and writing, especially in the Arab World and in the State of Kuwait in particular. Although some of the studies tackled the encountered problems of students in higher education, the focus on scientific research skills' difficulties were partially included as a domain only (Neumann, 1994; Jenkins et al., 1998; Thomas and Harris, 2000; Lindsay et al. 2000; Zamorski, 2002; Moulding & Hadley, 2010; Johnes, 2006; Taraf, 2003; Al-Shammari, 2008; Barakat & Huseen, 2009; and Al-Maghrabi, 2012).

Therefore, this study is of paramount importance to policy makers and curriculum developers in the College of Higher Studies at Kuwait University and the College of Educations to reconsider the importance of research in the lives of teachers' professionand work on developing teachers as researchers as an end product goal when they graduate withan MA degree in Education and not merely a gate to the degree which will be obsolete after graduation. Jones (2006: 33) describes the importance of both research projects and dissertations as they "encourage a deep rather than a surface approach to learning, by requiring students to integrate new knowledge with existing knowledge, and to conceptualize and question information, rather than imitate it".

METHOD

Participants

Based on the statistics of the Graduate School for the Fall Semester of 2010, the total of graduate students in the College of Education is 108, comprised of 98 females and 10 males. In this study, out of one hundred and eight MA students, sixty eight MA students participated. According to their demographic data, there are sixty four female MA students and only four male MA students. Thirty five are in their second year compared to thirty three who are in their first year of the MA program. As for specialization, twenty five students are registered in "The Curriculum Path". Twenty four are registered in the "Administration & Educational Planning Path", nineteen are registered in "The Education Foundation Path".

MA students who plan to choose the "Thesis Option" are eighty four, while those who plan to choose the "Project Option" are 20 students. Table 1 represents the demographic data of the participants.

Table 1
Description of the Study Participants

Variable Labels	Levels	Frequency	Valid %
Gender	Male	4	5.9
	Female	64	94.1
Year of Study	Year 1	33	48.5
	Year 2	35	51.5
Specialization	Curriculum	25	36.8
	Administration & Educational planning	24	35.3
	Education Foundation	19	27.9
Degree	Project	20	29.4
	Thesis	48	70.6

Instrument

The study employed a questionnaire developed by the author for data gathering. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section sought the demographic data of the participants covering the following variables: gender, year of study, specialization, and degree. The second section covered a total of 48 items divided into two domains: "Required Research Skills" including 26 items, and "Encountered Research Difficulties" covering 22 Items. The questionnaire was administered to willing students during the Summer Semester. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants as well as how to respond to the items on the questionnaire. The participants were asked to rate their opinions of the questionnaire statements based on a 1-3 Likert scale as follows: 3 = agree, 2 = not sure, and 1 = disagree.

Validity and reliability

The questionnaire was reviewed by a group of professors from the College of Education representing the following the Departments: Curriculum and Instruction, Educational Psychology, and Administration and Educational Planning. It was amended according to their suggestions. In addition, the questionnaire was also piloted with 10 MA students, suggestions were gained and taken into consideration during the final revision of the questionnaire items.

Table 2
Reliability Coefficient for the Instrument Domains

Variables Labels	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	S. D.	No. of Items
Domain 1 "Required Research Skills"	0.951	93.21	18.770	26
Domain 2 "Encountered Research Difficulties"	0.899	82.81	11.543	22
Domain All	0.850	176.01	18.804	48

Coefficient Alpha Cronbach was calculated to obtain a measure of consistency and reliability of the instrument for all the48 items in its two domains. The reliability coefficients "Alpha" of all domains equals 0.850. In addition, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability valuefor each domain was calculated as follows: the required research skills domain is "0.951", and the encountered research difficulties are "0.899". Table2 shows the reliability coefficients for the study instrument and its domains.

Limitations

The study is limited in its focus as it investigates the research skills of MA students at the College of Education in Kuwait University. In addition the study is limited in its duration to the academic school year of 2010/2011.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To answer the study questions, the researcher calculates percentages, means, and standard deviations of the participants' responses. Results related to the first question, "What are the required research skills as perceived by MA students at the College of Education?"; are presented in Table 3 which shows the participants' responses to the 26 questionnaire items.

It can be noted from Table 3that the items which scored the highest percentages reflecting MA students required research skills are items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 15, 23, 25, and 26.

Table 3
MA Students' Perception of the Required Research Rkills

Domain One: Required Research Skills	3 %	2 %	1 %	Mean	S.D.
1) Choosing a research topic	17.6	4.4	78.0	4.01	.635
2) Writing ideas expressively	86.7	10.3	2.9	3.99	.743
3) Sequencing ideas successfully.	85.3	10.3	4.4	3.81	1.040
4) Linking between paragraphs coherently	69.1	20.6	10.3	3.93	.997
5) Summarizing results of previous studies concisely	73.5	17.6	8.8	3.97	.946
6) Writing learned lessons from previous studies	77.9	14.7	7.3	3.91	1.116
7) Documenting references	73.5	17.6	8.9	3.94	1.020
8) Documenting references within the study	70.6	23.5	5.9	4.18	.690
9) Determining the population of the study	13.2	2.9	83.8	3.99	1.086
10) Determining the appropriate number of the sample	19.1	7.4	73.5	3.74	1.017
11) Defining the study problem	19.1	10.3	70.6	3.76	.979
12) Presenting the study problem	22.1	8.8	69.1	3.60	1.174
13) Formulating the study questions	20.6	16.2	63.3	3.47	1.190
14) Formulating the study hypothesis	26.5	17.7	55.9	3.49	1.240
15) Choosing the appropriate data collection tool.	58.8	19.2	22.1	3.56	1.177
16) Determining both the dependent and independent variables	20.6	17.6	61.8	3.18	1.315
17) Interpreting results	33.8	20.6	45.6	3.26	1.241
18) Transferring data into tables	32.0	33.8	30.9	2.91	1.267
19) Choosing the appropriate research methodology	47.2	26.4	26.4	2.87	1.280
20) Knowing the difference between statistical programs	13.2	2.9	83.8	3.21	1.229
21) Knowing how to run the appropriate statistical analysis	19.1	7.4	73.5	2.76	1.271
22) Skilled in note taking and summary writing	17.6	13.2	69.1	2.76	1.247
23) Knowing the ethics of scientific research	86.7	8.8	4.4	3.47	1.252
24) Writing the study following APA style	19.1	19.1	61.8	3.71	1.185
25) Choosing relevant studies to the research topic	78.0	17.6	4.4	4.22	.944
26) Poor research skills among MA students	73.5	17.6	8.8	3.51	1.228

The MA degree in Education is the first stage for in-service teachers to be recognized as future researchers. This will encourage them to conduct action research investigating current or predicted educational problems, on the one hand, or pursue their higher studies on the other hand. Yet, from the analysis of the study results, it shows that MA students are in need of mastering certain research skills to put them on the right track which is a normal step in the learning process. Accordingly, the results of the present study indicate that MA students are weak in doing research on certain research skills like choosing a problem to research, putting ideas together coherently, documenting citations in the body of the thesis and references, using the appropriate statistical program, and becoming familiar with the ethics of scientific research. This could be a result of their undergraduate preparation as the BA degree does not pay enough attention to scientific research preparation courses. The discussed research skills match the findings and recommendations of (Ravid, 1997; Al-Ajez, 2000; Al-Kutheri, 2005; Reis-Jorge, 2007; Al-Shamari, 2008; Vehvilanen, 2009; Barakat & Huseen; 2009; & Moulding & Hadley, 2010). It is important to have more focused on the theo-retical and practical research courses to master the needed research skills.

Results related to the second question

In relation to the second research question "What are the encountered research difficulties as perceived by MA students at the College of Education?", MA students were asked to express their opinions of the twenty two items presented in the second domain "Encountered Research Difficulties". As the focus is on research difficulties, it seems that the majority of the responses show that MA students encounter some difficulties. The responses to questionnaire items are presented in Table 4.

It can be stated that MA students face a great deal of difficulty in their study and in the process of doing research as presented through their responses to the questionnaire items especially items 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, and 40.

Discussion

Receiving a proper supervision of the research process is crucial for the success of research and signals the birth of a researcher who will grow competent in further research doing.

Table 4
MA Students' Perception of the Encountered Research Difficulties

Domain Two: Encountered Research Difficulties	3 %	2 %	1 %	Mean	S. D.
27)Benefit of the studied courses when preparing the thesis	22.1	11.8	66.2	3.47	.938
28) Lack of interest of some faculty members to supervise MA students	73.5	7.4	19.1	3.32	1.126
29) Lack of interest of some supervisors in the selected research topic	50.0	19.1	30.9	4.00	.792
30) Limited resources and information necessary for certain research fields	61.7	16.2	22.1	3.59	1.249
31) Limited relevant English resources in the college library	58.8	10.7	30.9	3.78	1.291
32) Shortage in up to date references in the college elibrary	61.8	19.1	19.1	4.19	1.123
33) Lack of resources in Arabic	50.0	23.5	26.5	3.50	1.178
34) Each supervisor prefers applying certain research methods	80.8	5.8	13.2	3.60	1.248
35) Each supervisor prefers choosing certain data collection tool	67.7	11.8	20.6	3.79	1.127
36) Some supervisors are not sufficiently available for MA students	67.6	10.3	22.1	3.74	1.180
37) Difficulties with the fieldwork application	75.0	4.4	20.6	4.34	1.016
38) High load of assignments	73.2	11.8	30.9	3.87	1.158
39) Poor preparation for the Viva	53.3	11.8	27.9	4.01	1.165
40) MA students are directed to conduct quantitative over qualitative research	58.8	7.4	33.8	4.03	.846
41) Adequate financial allocations for the search application	41.1	55.9	2.9	3.49	1.252
42) Adequate financial allocations to attend conferences	16.2	64.7	19.1	4.04	1.028
43) Faculty staff supervisory skills vary	82.3	11.8	5.9	3.66	1.087
44) Some supervisors do not provide enough support during the writing process of the thesis	63.2	23.5	13.2	3.84	1.016
45) lack of practice in writing short research papers in the taught courses prior to registering in the thesis option	67.6	16.2	13.2	3.66	.924
46) traditional method of teaching in the MA program does not encourage creativity	63.2	13.2	23.5	2.93	.919
47) Poor command of the English language	77.9	14.7	7.3	4.15	.902
48) Part time students find it difficult to fulfill the study requirements	67.6	13.2	16.2	3.81	1.149

Therefore, MA students made it clear about their needs for academic supervisors who play a significant role in supporting their research inquiry, research field application, the process of writing up of the thesis, and the academic and psychological preparation for the thesis defense. Thus, there must be a clear match between the research topic and the field of specialization of the supervisors. In addition, supervisors must encourage MA students to attend research seminars to familiarize them with relevant issues of research as well as ethics of the trade. All that will motivate MA students to apply themselves into discussions to learn more about research and have a better chance to have dialogue with the rest of the academic supervisors to broaden their horizons about research and the different methodologies that can be applied. Finally, passing a TOEFL test may not be enough as a score. A good command of the English language is necessary to assist students in their readings of relevant literature in international journals. With that, the findings of this study match the findings of (Taraf, 2003; Al-Kutheri, 2005; Dorfman & Liscomb, 2005; Shatnawi, 2006; Taylor, 2007; Kabeesh, 2007; Al-Aqeel, 2008; Barakat & Huseen, 2009; Vehvilanen, 2009; Al-Sharman, 2010; and Al-Maghrabi, 2012).

Results related to the third question

The third question intends to test if there is a significant effect for gender, years of study, specialization and degree. Tables 5, 6, and 7 show the means and standard deviations of the students' responses as t-test and One Way ANOVA were applied.

As for the effect of gender, this independent variable has been excluded as the number of female students is bigger than the number of the male students which makes running such a comparison insufficient.

Table 5 shows that there were significant differences between the total of answers according to "Year of Study" with reference to Domain One as the t-test level of significance is p > 0.05.

Table 6 shows that there were significant differences between the total of answers according to Degree with reference to both of the instrument domains as the t-test level of significance is p > 0.05.

Table 7 shows that there is a significant difference in the opinions of graduate students with respect to their major of specialization with reference to Curriculum and Administration in TOT_1 & with reference to Administration and Foundation in TOT_2. To find as which pairs of groups differ significantly, we have applied multiple comparison tests using the Scheffe procedures. Scheffe (.05) shows that no two groups differ significantly at (.05).

Table 5
T-Test Results of TOT _1 to TOT _2 Per Year of Study

Variable Names	YEAR 1			YEAR 2			t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
	N	Mean	S. D.	N	Mean	S. D.			
TOT_1	33	3.3177	.66908	35	3.8394	.66350	-3.228	66	.002*
TOT_2	33	3.7980	.55316	35	3.7959	.71200	.013	66	.989

Table 6
T-Test Results of TOT _1 to TOT _2 Per Degree

Variable Names	Project			Thesis			t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
	N	Mean	S. D.	N	Mean	S. D.			
TOT_1	20	3.2103	.61307	48	3.7428	.69608	-2.972	66	.004*
TOT_2	20	4.1381	.43723	48	3.6548	.65392	3.029	66	.005*

Table 7
F-Test (ANOVA) by Specialization

Variable Labels	Source	D.F.	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F-Ratio	Sig.
TOT_1	Between Groups	2	3.141	1.570	3.317	.043*
	Within Groups	65	30.776	0.473		
TOT_2	Between Groups	2	4.208	2.104	5.993	.004*
	Within Groups	65	22.820	.473		

CONCLUSION

In summary, it can be stated that most of the MA participants at the current stage of their study in the program lack basic research skills which are the backbone of any research design including : selecting a research topic, defining the research problem and questions, selecting suitable methodology, and documenting references. In addition, they encounter several difficulties in conducting their research, the most significant ones are related to academic supervisors in terms of being competent in supervising them, being available to students, and being competent in the researched topic field. Moreover, the lack of a good command of the English Language becomes a great barrier to move forward in learning more about research conduction, the research topic, and relevant research in international journals.

This implies that the MA students in the College of Education at Kuwait University struggle in understanding the process of research, its application, and the process of writing up which will provide them with a negative experience on research doing. This as well will have a negative impact on them in doing future research. Graduating in competent researchers will not fulfill the main goal of the MA program in the College of Education at Kuwait University, which is developing MA students' abilities of research. This has a negative future implication as many of the MA students might become reluctant to conduct future research.

Educational research plays a significant role in developing MA students' professional teaching performance, pedagogical skills, and enhancing their active engagement with knowledge which will activate the researcher in them. In the College of Education at Kuwait University, MA students find it difficult to fulfill the research aspects and procedures. This could be a result of their lack of experience in conducting research which could be partially part of the learning process, keeping in mind that they were not introduced to research in their undergraduate studies. Furthermore, this suggests as well their needs for guidance, support and an understanding of how to do research. Therefore, in such a learning stage MA students need to have a clear understanding of how best to conduct educational research. Definitely, becoming a researcher requires mastering the skills of the

trade and that is never difficult once the MA students at Kuwait University are exposed to intensive course in research methodology and apply their theoretical knowledge into practice. Such an important notion of becoming a talented researcher has to be nurtured and supported by faculty staff during the MA program. This suggests a careful match between MA students and supervisors whom research experience have to match the research topic of the MA students. Furthermore, faculty staff who supervise MA students have to be aware of the notion of availability to their MA students as that will enhance communication between them and thus broaden the horizons of MA students in their research inquires. This will help students gain the necessary research skills, insights, and experiences. In addition, supervisors have to keep in mind two important issues. First, the way they approach their MA students as future researchers as that will develop their way in deal with students. Second, the course content and teaching styles should depart from the undergraduate level depending merely on lecturing to the graduate level employing group discussions, seminars, presentations, and research analysis. Such an approach in teaching and learning will provide MA students' with a sense of the new level of study as graduate students, and equip them with a true understanding of research. All that will play a role in developing MA students' research skills prior to the field study and the writing up of their MA thesis or graduation project which is a turning point in the MA program. Mastering the research skills will represent both the supervisor's experience in guiding and supervising the MA students to the end of the road successfully, on the one hand, and a proof of MA students' ability to write a thesis on the other hand.

In order to move forward in the MA program in the College of Education at Kuwait University, several recommended steps have to be applied:

1. Providing MA students with a solid background in research methodology and developing their research skills in terms of choosing the research topic, forming the research problem and questions, and developing the appropriate research tool.

2. Educating MA students on the importance of research in the educational

process, as it reveals the level of educational practices in various fields.

3. Encouraging faculty staff to provide students with both the theoretical and practical part of research.

4. Arranging for seminars and meetings which should include both faculty staff and MA students to discuss recent issues in educational research.

5. Assigning a supervisory panel to review MA students' research proposals after they complete their taught courses and prior to conducting their research and the writing up process. This will provide MA students with a feedback on how to develop their proposals to lead to a proved scientific research.

6. Assigning a panel to review the MA thesis to stand on the strengths and weakness prior to sending thesis to the internal and external examiners. This will encourage supervisors to apply themselves more in the supervision process, and reassure MA students that their thesis meets the scientific research standards.

7. Focusing future research plans on the actual needs of the field as that will help in achieving the goals of graduate studies in education through directing scientific research to serve the educational needs in particular and the community in general.

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